OBITUARY

Jane Goodall 3 April 1934 – 1 October 2025

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JANE GOODALL, the English conservationist renowned for her work with chimpanzees in Gombe National Park in Tanzania, died on 1 October, aged 91. Global obituaries praised her work, but also carried silences. There is much to question about Goodall.

She fed primates and habituated them to human presence, methods that undermine the claim Goodall studied chimpanzee behaviour in the wild. "It was not science and it wouldn't pass peer review today," says Mordecai Ogada, a Kenyan conservation scientist and author of *The Big Conservation Lie*.

Goodall's fame partly stemmed from being a lone (white) woman working in African forests. She was considered bold for flying to another continent. Yet even today, the majority of African scientists don't have the privilege of research travel.

Her career embodied privilege in many other ways. In 1960 when Goodall began her work, Tanzania was under British colonial rule. She didn't have a degree but paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey recruited her for research. She went on to enter Cambridge University as a PhD candidate without having completed undergraduate studies. And for five years, during which she set up her Jane Goodall Institute, she was married to Tanzania's national parks director, Derek Bryceson.

Goodall's research did not acknowledge African oral histories and anecdotes about wildlife, positioning her as the original discoverer of common primate behaviour like the use of tools and organised warfare.

What Goodall acknowledged instead was the fictional Tarzan, a white nobleman who fights for animals as black people poach them. Such racist myths continue to shape conservation efforts. "We are protecting 'white spaces' and some species, but this is not conservation. We are not protecting ecosystems and we are excluding people and livelihoods," Ogada says.

Jane Goodall was one of the last symbols of "conservation" that was politically, socially, and financially unsustainable, and colonial in its ethos. ■